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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: RESPONSE TO HEAD OF
MISSION IN SKOPJE AMBASSADOR RADICATI

1. Post is authorized to make the following statement at the April 17th, 2008 meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna:

Begin Text:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Radicati, welcome back to the Permanent Council.

Often when we discuss countries that have experienced a conflict in the last decade, our focus is on helping to consolidate security and stability in a transitional democracy. So it is with great pleasure that today we instead can discuss a country that since the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement seven years ago has made tremendous strides in developing its multiethnic democratic institutions on its path to full Euro-Atlantic integration. Although the pace of reform in Macedonia has varied, its progress has been steady and certain. Its political leadership has remained dedicated to their country's social, economic, and democratic development and committed to fulfilling Macedonia's international commitments.

The United States regrets that NATO at the Bucharest summit did not issue a membership invitation to Macedonia. We are pleased, however, that Allies at the Bucharest summit agreed that Macedonia has met the performance-based standards for membership, and that they decided to issue an invitation as soon as the name issue is resolved, without tying such a decision to future ministerial or summit meetings. The United States hopes a solution can be found through the UN process within weeks, not months.

We understand the disappointment that Macedonia's leadership has expressed with regard to the decision at Bucharest and welcome its commitment to continue its engagement toward a solution to the name issue and to redouble its efforts on the reform track.

The OSCE Spillover Monitoring Mission to Skopje has played an integral role supporting the Government in its reform process. We applaud the OSCE's continued contributions to international community coordination and cooperation in Skopje in regular, close consultation with our Embassy, NATO representatives, and the EU Special Representative. We also appreciate that Ambassador Radicati and his mission have kept the Secretariat and delegations briefed on the political situation in the country and the mission's activities.

In this vein, the U.S. places strong weight on the mission's rule of law programs, which should be continued as a priority for the mission this year. We are pleased with the progress made in judicial and police reform and encourage sustained efforts in this regard. We also welcome the willingness of the mission to monitor any legal proceedings that could result from the return of four files from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to Macedonian

jurisdiction. We also place great store in the mission,s continued confidence-building work to deepen cooperation and mutual understanding between different political and ethnic communities in Macedonia, in the spirit of the Framework Agreement.

It is commendable that Ambassador Radicati has been able to actively pursue the mission,s programmatic goals in rule of law, police reform, public administration reform, and the important confidence building measures noted before, while simultaneously downsizing the mission and reducing its budget. This is rare among missions, and we appreciate the efficiency of the mission,s activities and the transparency of its decisions.

We encourage the mission,s continued attention to rightsizing to reflect progress made by the country. In our view, Macedonia has made excellent progress in the field of media freedom, we believe that now is the time to start wrapping up some of the media development programs and start handing over program management and funding to government bodies. We do see utility in keeping the field mission in Tetovo open for now, as its engagement in confidence building activities and monitoring remain productive and useful, but note that the phase-out of that field office should begin by the end of the year.

In closing, the United States takes note of the decision by the Government to hold early parliamentary elections on June

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1st. We encourage the Government and political party leaders not to delay reform implementation during the election period and to work together to ensure that the elections reflect Macedonia,s democratic maturity. We urge ODIHR to begin planning for a monitoring mission. As domestic election monitoring NGOs have not budgeted for early elections, we also hope that the mission can help host a donors meeting to afford local NGOs an opportunity to appeal for funding.

Thank you very much for joining us today, Ambassador Radicati.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
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